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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 24, 2007  
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**TWO LEIJA-SANCHEZ BROTHERS AND ALLEGED HIT-MAN ARRESTED  
IN MEXICO; TRIO AND THIRD LEIJA-SANCHEZ BROTHER NOW FACING  
RACKETEERING AND MURDER-RELATED CHARGES IN FALSE IDENTIFICATION  
DOCUMENT CONSPIRACY CASE AGAINST 23 DEFENDANTS IN CHICAGO**

CHICAGO – Federal racketeering conspiracy and murder-related charges were added against three brothers – now all in custody and charged together for the first time – and their alleged “hit-man” in Mexico to a pending indictment resulting from the dismantling in April of an international counterfeit identification document business that allegedly generated profits between \$2.5 million and \$3 million a year in Chicago’s Little Village Community. **Manuel Leija-Sanchez**, 40, who was arrested in Mexico last Friday, and his brother, **Pedro Leija-Sanchez**, 35, who was arrested in Mexico in August, are facing extradition to the United States. Together with a third brother, **Julio Leija-Sanchez**, 31, who was arrested in Chicago in April, the three are among a total of 23 defendants facing charges in Chicago as part of *Operation Paper Tiger*, an investigation led by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Also facing extradition from Mexico is the alleged hit-man, **Gerardo Salazar-Rodriguez**, 34, who was charged previously and was arrested in August in Mexico, federal law enforcement officials announced today.

A superseding indictment alleges that the Mexico-based Leija-Sanchez Organization operated a bustling fraudulent identification document business in Chicago since at least 1993 and was supervised by an overall leader living in Chicago, rotating among the three Leija-Sanchez brothers, who made the day-to-day decisions and, along with others, ordered violent acts against competitors, rivals and others. The alleged criminal activity operated openly in and around the Little Village Discount Mall at 26<sup>th</sup> Street and Albany in Chicago. The indictment alleges that the organization sold as many as 50 to 100 sets of fraudulent identification documents each day, charging customers approximately \$200 to \$300 cash per “set,” consisting of a Social Security card and either an Immigration “green card” or a State driver’s license.

According to the indictment, the Leija-Sanchez Organization turned deadly in early April when Guillermo Jimenez Flores, also known as “Montes,” a former member of the organization who turned a fledgling rival, was allegedly shot to death in Mexico by Salazar-Rodriguez, who was paid by and conspired with the three Leija-Sanchez brothers. The same four defendants also allegedly conspired about the same time to kill a second victim in Mexico known as “Bruno.”

The three Leija-Sanchez brothers and Salazar-Rodriguez were each charged with one count of racketeering conspiracy, murder in aid of racketeering, and conspiracy to murder, and two counts of conspiracy to commit murder outside the United States. Julio Leija-Sanchez and Salazar-Rodriguez were also charged with one count of murder for hire.

The new charges in the superseding indictment returned late yesterday by a federal grand jury were announced by Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, and Elissa A. Brown, Special Agent-in-Charge of the ICE Office of Investigations in Chicago. They were joined by Tim W. Viertel, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Office of the U.S. Secret

Service; and Robert D. Grant, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The Chicago Police Department and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service also assisted in the investigation, which is continuing, the officials said.

“The arrests of Manuel and Pedro Leija-Sanchez and Salazar-Rodriguez in Mexico are landmark achievements in the dismantling of one of the largest fraudulent document organizations operating in Chicago and throughout the country,” Ms. Brown said. “ICE is grateful for the excellent cooperation and assistance provided by the Mexican authorities in this case. These arrests prove that international borders are not barriers for fugitives to hide behind.”

The superseding indictment also charges alien smuggling conspiracy against the three Leija-Sanchez brothers and previous co-defendant **Elias Marquez**, 52, alleging that once illegal individuals from Mexico arrived in Chicago the organization provided them false identification, and put them to work for the organization to pay off their debt for being smuggled here. It also adds a currency smuggling count against the three brothers and previous co-defendants **Elias Marquez** and **Raul Gonzalez-Marquez**, 58, who remains a fugitive. Two new forfeiture allegations were added, along with a previous count, each seeking \$5 million in illegal proceeds from the alleged criminal activity.

The superseding indictment also contains a previously-charged count alleging that all 23 defendants conspired to illegally produce identification documents, authentication features and false identification documents, and to commit visa fraud.

False identification documents were allegedly manufactured at various locations, including apartments located at 2555 South Lombard in Cicero, and 5366 South Campbell in Chicago. On April 24, ICE, FBI and Secret Service seized computer towers, laptop computers, printers, scanners, a cutting board, hundreds of blank identification cards, including social security cards, and more than

\$220,000 cash, with most of the money recovered from the residence of Elias Marquez on West 64<sup>th</sup> Street in Chicago.

According to the indictment, the Leija-Sanchez Organization allegedly recruited Mexican nationals to come illegally to Chicago and sell false documents on street corners in the Little Village neighborhood, where they openly solicited business for the organization. These individuals sold such false identification documents as driver's licenses and immigration documents such as Resident Alien Cards (Green Cards). When these sellers located a customer, they obtained a photograph and personal information, such as the name and address that the customer wanted on a particular card. Once the sellers accumulated such information from enough customers, they would send that information to a document production facility where the false documents were made.

The government is being represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Michelle Nasser Weiss, Andrew Porter and David Buvinger.

If convicted, the racketeering and murder-related counts against the Leija-Sanchez brothers and Salazar-Rodriguez, in this case, carry the following maximum penalties: murder in aid of racketeering, and murder for hire – each carry death or life in prison; racketeering conspiracy and conspiracy to commit murder outside the United States – each carry life in prison; and conspiracy to murder – 10 years in prison, and each count carries a maximum fine of \$250,000. Note, however, that the Court would determine the appropriate sentence to be imposed.

The public is reminded that an indictment contains only charges and is not evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent and are entitled to a fair trial at which the government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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